

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

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1.

A method comprising the steps of:

utilizing the excess capacity of a network by conveying data over said network during a period of less than maximum usage;

receiving said data during said period of less than maximum usage;

accumulating said data over an extended period of time; and

retrieving said data for on-demand use at a time after said extended period of time.

2. A method as recited in Claim 1, in which said network includes a satellite.

3. A method as recited in Claim 2, in which said satellites operate in low Earth orbit.

4. A method as recited in Claim 2, in which said satellites operate in medium Earth orbit.
5. A method as recited in Claim 2, in which said satellites operate in high Earth orbit.
6. A method as recited in Claim 2, in which said satellites operate in geosynchronous Earth orbit.
7. A method as recited in Claim 2, in which said satellites operate in low Earth orbit.
8. A method as recited in Claim 2, in which said network includes a sub-orbital platform.
9. A method as recited in Claim 2, in which said network includes a terrestrial wired network.

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10. A method as recited in Claim 2, in which said network includes a terrestrial wireless network.

11. An apparatus comprising:

a gateway means for transmitting a plurality of digitized packets of data;

a relay means for receiving said plurality of digitized packets of data from said gateway means and for retransmitting during a time period when the total communications capacity of said relay means is not fully used;

a receiver means for collecting said plurality of digitized packets of data which are transmitted from said satellite means;

said receiver means including a storage means for accumulating said plurality of digitized packets of data incrementally over an extended period of time; and

retrieving and using said plurality of digitized packets of data after a generally full program has been accumulated.

12. An apparatus as claimed in Claim 11, in which said receiver means is shielded to eliminate local radio frequency transmissions that could be used to make an unauthorized copy.

13. An apparatus as claimed in Claim 11, in which said receiver means is tamper-proofed to thwart unauthorized copying.

14. An apparatus as claimed in Claim 11, in which said relay means includes a satellite.

15. An apparatus as claimed in Claim 11, in which said relay means includes a sub-orbital platform.

16. An apparatus as claimed in Claim 11, in which said relay means includes a wired terrestrial network.

17. An apparatus as claimed in Claim 11, in which said relay means includes a wireless terrestrial network.

18. An apparatus as claimed in Claim 11, in which said receiver means is located on the Earth's surface.

19. An apparatus as claimed in Claim 11, in which said receiver means is located on the Earth's surface.

20. An apparatus as claimed in Claim 11, in which said receiver means is located in a fixed terminal.

21. An apparatus as claimed in Claim 11, in which said receiver means is located in a portable terminal.

22. An apparatus as claimed in Claim 11, in which said receiver means is located in a mobile terminal.

23. An apparatus as claimed in Claim 11, in which said receiver means is located in a sub-orbital platform.

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24. An apparatus as claimed in Claim 11, in which said receiver means is located in a satellite in orbit.

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